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Emanuel wants answers on BP oil spill

The mayor says he wants to make sure BP is a good corporate citizen.

March 27, 2014

By: Michael Puente



(WBEZ/Michael Puente)

Workers along Lake Michigan continue to clean up an oil spill from BP's Whiting refinery in Indiana.

Although BP's Whiting refinery is a short distance from the city of Chicago, it is firmly in the state of Indiana and answers to that state and its agencies. But that's not stopping Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel from asking for a full report on this week's oil spill to be given to the city and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.

"I'll expect a full accounting to the public and the city of Chicago of the damage that was done, how much, what the clean up efforts were, how comprehensive they have been and what actions the company will take to ensure this doesn't happen again," Emanuel said Wednesday while announcing a plan to invest \$671 million to upgrade the city's water infrastructure.

A BP spokesman said this week it appears crude oil somehow seeped into the refinery's water filtration plant that's adjacent to the lake. Indiana Department of Environmental Management spokesman Dan Goldblatt told WBEZ Wednesday that unconfirmed reports put the amount of spillage at about a dozen barrels of crude oil.

The Joint Information Center, comprised of the U.S. EPA and the U.S. Coast Guard, put the amount of crude oil spilling into Lake Michigan between nine and 18 barrels of crude oil, which is also based on figures provided by BP, said U.S. Chief Petty Officer Alan Haraf.

A barrel of oil can produce about 42 gallons of gasoline, so potentially 756 gallons of oil spilled into Lake Michigan. Earlier estimates had pegged the amount at 10 to 12 barrels of oil.

The spill was detected around 4:30 p.m. Monday. By 9 p.m. a representative with the U.S. EPA said it appeared the leak had been stopped. Cleanup continued Wednesday along the shore of a small private beach between the refinery and its neighbor ArcelorMittal Steel Company.

"BP continues to make progress in responding to an incident Monday at the Whiting Refinery.

Crews have recovered the vast majority of oil that had been visible on the surface of a cove-like area of Lake Michigan and on the shoreline between the refinery and a nearby steel mill,” BP announced Wednesday from its US Press Office based in Houston. “They have used vacuum trucks and absorbent boom to contain and clean up the surface oil. Responders also manually collected oil that had reached the shore.”

BP said monitoring continues with the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. EPA and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management.

“BP and federal agencies are assessing the shoreline to determine what, if any, next steps are required in the response,” a company statement said. “BP continues to work to calculate the amount of oil discharged into the lake. This work involves estimating how much oil was released into the refinery’s cooling water system, water treatment plant and ultimately into the lake.”

According to the U.S. EPA, its Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Team inspected the shoreline today for three hours to assess the presence of oil and to recommend cleanup techniques as required.

“The team saw minimal oiling of the shoreline and recommended a small manual removal crew conduct maintenance along the shoreline,” the U.S. EPA said in a news release. “Weather and wind conditions improved overnight allowing teams to once again secure boom.”

Sources involved in the cleanup say the crude oil that spilled into the lake was a combination of so-called sweet crude (from domestic sources) and crude from Canada’s Tar Sands region, which is considered heavier and dirtier. The tar sands oil is a source of contention among environmentalists.

“A spill like this one, whether big or small, will continue to garner national headlines. And that is the sort of behavior that will keep BP Whiting the refinery Chicagoans love to hate,” Henry Henderson, Midwest program director of the Chicago office for the Natural Resources Defense Council, wrote in a blog post.

So far, no Indiana or Northwest Indiana public official have made statements regarding the spill. BP represents a major source of jobs and property taxes for Northwest Indiana, and the company just recently completed a \$4 billion modernization of the more than 100 year old Whiting refinery.

But BP often has been on the receiving end of scathing comments by Illinois officials.

Lately, Mayor Emanuel, Gov. Pat Quinn and U.S. Senator Dick Durbin have taken the company to task for transporting thousands of tons of pet coke, short for petroleum coke, to a site on Chicago’s Southeast side. Residents there have complained about the dust-like substance making them sick when it becomes airborne.

Some city officials want the substance completely banned though so far Emanuel is only pushing an ordinance that would severely restrict the use and storage of pet coke. But with the new oil spill BP is under the microscope again.

“I want to make sure that BP is a good corporate citizen next door in Indiana,” Emanuel said.

And, at least for now, BP is responding.

“We’ve been engaged with the mayor’s office since the onset of this incident and are providing his office with regular updates,” BP spokesman Scott Dean told WBEZ Wednesday night. “We will also continue to keep the public and relevant authorities informed as we investigate this matter.”

AP News

Correction: BP Whiting-Oil Spill story

March 27, 2014

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — In a March 26 story about a BP refinery spilling oil into Lake Michigan, The Associated Press misidentified the source of the initial estimate of the spill's size. That estimate came from BP through the U.S. Coast Guard, and did not originate with the Coast Guard.

An early version of the story also said the Coast Guard found "minimal oiling" along the shoreline. That assessment was reached by the Coast Guard, BP and the EPA.

A corrected version of the story is below:

[Story: In Oil Spill Liability Mess, BP Gets Stuck With Its Own Deal](#)

Coast Guard: BP estimates 9 to 18 barrels of oil in lake

Coast Guard: BP estimates Indiana refinery released 9 to 18 barrels of oil into Lake Michigan

By RICK CALLAHAN

[Video: U.S. Lifts Ban on BP Winning Federal Contracts](#)

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — An initial assessment of a Lake Michigan oil spill shows that between nine and 18 barrels of crude oil entered the lake following a malfunction at oil giant BP's sprawling northwestern Indiana refinery, the U.S. Coast Guard said Wednesday.

Coast Guard spokesman Chief Petty Officer Alan Haraf said the estimate came from BP's initial visual assessment Tuesday of the spill scene at the company's Whiting refinery some 20 miles southeast of downtown Chicago.

[Story: Charlie Rose Talks to Former BP Chief John Browne](#)

One barrel of oil contains about 42 gallons, meaning the estimate indicates between about 378 and 756 gallons of crude oil were released into the lake.

Haraf said a more accurate figure likely will be released later this week on how much oil entered the lake, where crews for BP continued their cleanup work Wednesday. Those crews deployed absorbent booms following the spill, which affected a half-mile of private shoreline that's owned by BP and is not accessible to the general public.

The Environmental Protection Agency, which is supervising the cleanup work with the U.S. Coast Guard, said Tuesday that BP crews had used vacuum trucks to suck up about 5,200 gallons of an oil and water mixture from the site and had also removed oil globs from the shoreline.

Graphic: Twenty-Five Years of Oil Spills

The EPA issued a brief statement Wednesday saying an assessment team from the agency, the Coast Guard and BP surveyed the spill site Wednesday and found "minimal oiling of the shoreline."

The EPA said the survey team has recommended that crews continue to scour the shoreline to manually remove any remaining oil.

BP said in a statement Wednesday that its crews "have recovered the vast majority of oil that had been visible on the surface" of a cove-like area where the spill occurred.

Story: Judges Slam More and More Plaintiffs' Attorneys for Corruption

The company said it continues its work to calculate how much oil was released into the lake during the spill, which was discovered Monday.

BP and EPA officials said Tuesday the spill apparently occurred when a malfunction allowed crude oil to enter a cooling system that draws lake water into the refinery to cool equipment and then returns that water to the lake.

Haraf said the spill area is confined to a cove area along the shoreline where BP discharges water from the refinery cooling operations into the lake.

The EPA has said the spill was not expected to pose any threat to municipal water supplies that draw on the lake's water.

Agency officials have said they are not aware of any previous oil spills at the site.

Dan Goldblatt, a spokesman for the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, said Wednesday a tentative review of recent state records also revealed no previous oil discharges into the lake from BP's Whiting complex.

Goldblatt said the state agency has no indication any oil had drifted beyond the immediate area along the lake where the spill occurred.

BP's Whiting refinery covers about 1,400 acres along the lake's shoreline.

The company completed work in late 2013 on a \$4.2 billion expansion and upgrade of the refinery that will make it a top processor of heavy crude oil extracted from Canada's tar sand deposits.

That expansion sparked outrage in 2007 among environmentalists after they learned a state permit would have allowed BP to increase its discharges of ammonia and pollution called suspended solids into the lake.

BP announced in August 2007 that it would find ways to keep the expanded refinery's discharges to the limits set under its previous permits.

<http://www.businessweek.com/ap/2014-03->

26/coast-guard-bp-let-9-to-18-barrels-of-oil-in-lake

EPA: Oil spill affected half-mile of Lake Michigan

11:49 AM, March 26, 2014 /

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- <http://www.freep.com/article/20140326/NEWS06/303260102/oil-spill-BP-whiting-Lake-Michigan>



BP's Whiting Refinery is seen along the shore of Lake Michigan on Tuesday, March 25, 2014, in Whiting, Ind. BP says it is assessing how much crude oil entered Lake Michigan following a malfunction at its northwestern Indiana refinery. / AP

Associated Press

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In this March 25, 2014 photo, a worker dumps soil into a bag in Whiting, Ind. Crews for oil giant BP worked Tuesday to clean up an undetermined amount of crude oil that spilled into Lake Michigan and affected about a half-mile section of shoreline near Chicago following a malfunction at BP's northwestern Indiana refinery, officials said. / Jim Karczewski/Associated Press

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WHITING, IND. — Crews for oil giant BP worked Tuesday to clean up an undetermined amount of crude oil that spilled into Lake Michigan and affected about a half-mile section of shoreline near Chicago following a malfunction at BP's northwestern Indiana refinery, officials said.

The spill reported Monday afternoon by BP appears to have been contained by company crew members who deployed absorbent booms around the spill site, said Mike Beslow, on-scene coordinator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Region 5.

BP spokesman Scott Dean said the area affected by the spill was a cove along the Lake Michigan at the company's sprawling Whiting refinery, which covers about 1,400 acres.

The spill is about 20 miles southeast of downtown Chicago but was not expected to pose any threat to municipal water supplies that draw on the lake's water, Beslow said.

A Coast Guard flyover of the area Tuesday did not reveal any oil outside the containment booms, Beslow said during a Tuesday afternoon media briefing, "but there is oil on the beach that is being addressed."

Beslow said BP crews were using vacuum trucks to suck up the corralled oil and were cleaning up oil along 2,700 feet of private shoreline the company owns at the Whiting site, he said.

The EPA and the U.S. Coast Guard were supervising that work, Beslow said.

Beslow said the Coast Guard was working with BP officials to determine how much oil had been discharged into the lake.

Dean, the BP spokesman, said northerly winds were helping contain the oil by pushing it toward the shoreline.

"It's in the lake, yes, but it's not moving around freely. It's been kind of contained because of the weather and of the geography of the lakefront there," Dean said.

BP said in a statement Tuesday evening that it believes that "an upset at a crude distillation unit may have sent crude oil into the refinery's cooling water outfall and then into the lake."

The company said it has taken steps to prevent another discharge and might have an estimate Wednesday on how much oil was spilled.

BP initially reported to the EPA that when its workers discovered the spill they observed an oily sheen that covered about 5,000 square yards, said Susan Hedman, the EPA's regional administrator.

Dan Goldblatt, a spokesman for the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, said an agency official who was at the scene around 2 a.m. Tuesday had reported "a large sheen on the lake."

Hedman said the EPA is not aware of any previous oil spills at the site, but the agency is just beginning its assessment of this week's spill.

"EPA's lawyers will be looking into this matter and determining whether or not enforcement action is appropriate," she said.

U.S. Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., who co-chairs the Senate Great Lakes Task Force, said in a statement that the incident "underscores the importance of vigilance in protecting our Great Lakes from oil spills."

"We are fortunate that the spill appears to have been quickly contained, but I will continue to monitor developments to ensure that the cleanup is rapid and complete," Levin said.



Coast Guard BP estimates 9 to 18 barrels of oil spilled into Lake Michigan

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Corrected

By RICK CALLAHAN

Associated Press

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Coast Guard spokesman Chief Petty Officer Alan Haraf said the estimate came from BP's initial visual assessment Tuesday of the spill scene at the company's Whiting refinery some 20 miles southeast of downtown Chicago.

One barrel of oil contains about 42 gallons, meaning the estimate indicates between about 378 and 756 gallons of crude oil were released into the lake.

Haraf said a more accurate figure likely will be released later this week on how much oil entered the lake, where crews for BP continued their cleanup work Wednesday. Those crews deployed absorbent booms following the spill, which affected a half-mile of private shoreline that's owned by BP and is not accessible to the general public.

The Environmental Protection Agency, which is supervising the cleanup work with the U.S. Coast Guard, said Tuesday that BP crews had used vacuum trucks to suck up about 5,200 gallons of an oil and water mixture from the site and had also removed oil globs from the shoreline.

The EPA issued a brief statement Wednesday saying an assessment team from the agency, the Coast Guard and BP surveyed the spill site Wednesday and found "minimal oiling of the shoreline."

The EPA said the survey team has recommended that crews continue to scour the shoreline to manually remove any remaining oil.

BP said in a statement Wednesday that its crews "have recovered the vast majority of oil that had been visible on the surface" of a cove-like area where the spill occurred.

The company said it continues its work to calculate how much oil was released into the lake during the spill, which was discovered Monday.

BP and EPA officials said Tuesday the spill apparently occurred when a malfunction allowed crude oil to enter a cooling system that draws lake water into the refinery to cool equipment and then returns that water to the lake.

Haraf said the spill area is confined to a cove area along the shoreline where BP discharges water from the refinery cooling operations into the lake.

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Agency officials have said they are not aware of any previous oil spills at the site.

Dan Goldblatt, a spokesman for the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, said Wednesday a tentative review of recent state records also revealed no previous oil discharges into the lake from BP's Whiting complex.

Goldblatt said the state agency has no indication any oil had drifted beyond the immediate area along the lake where the spill

occurred.

BP's Whiting refinery covers about 1,400 acres along the lake's shoreline.

The company completed work in late 2013 on a \$4.2 billion expansion and upgrade of the refinery that will make it a top processor of heavy crude oil extracted from Canada's tar sand deposits.

That expansion sparked outrage in 2007 among environmentalists after they learned a state permit would have allowed BP to increase its discharges of ammonia and pollution called suspended solids into the lake.

BP announced in August 2007 that it would find ways to keep the expanded refinery's discharges to the limits set under its previous permits.

Malfunction at BP Whiting Refinery sends oil into Lake Michigan

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John J. Watkins, The Times

Crews comb the beach near the BP Whiting Refinery on Tuesday to clean up an oil spill in Lake Michigan.

March 25, 2014 6:56 pm • [Lauri Harvey Keagle and Joseph S. Pete Times Staff Writers](#)

Related Video



Whiting BP Oil Spill

WHITING | Hazmat-suited crews worked Tuesday to clean up an oil spill that spread across 5,000 square feet of Lake Michigan after a Monday afternoon discharge from the BP Whiting

Refinery.

Tarballs, or blobs of semi-solid oil, washed up along stretches of sandy and rocky shoreline that is owned by BP and inaccessible to the public. Coast Guard personnel drove back and forth along the southeast side of the refinery to haze the seagulls and keep them from landing in the oil-tainted beach.

The discharge of crude oil was discovered at 4:30 p.m. Monday, BP spokesman Scott Dean said. The spill has been contained and is being cleaned up, while the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reviews whether to fine the oil company or take any other enforcement action.

"We did have a processing disruption last night at the Whiting Refinery," Dean said via phone from the scene Tuesday morning. "We immediately activated the response team."

The spill presented no threat to human health or wildlife, said Mike Beslow, on-scene coordinator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. There were no reported injuries.

Dean said the discharge took place in "a little cove between the water treatment plant and the (ArcelorMittal Indiana Harbor) steel mill."

"Some oil found its way into the cooling water system," Dean said.

The oily water then was discharged into the cove leading to the lake, he said. The discharge did not last long.

Beslow said the refinery was no longer discharging oil when he arrived about 9 p.m. Monday. BP officials informed him crude oil, which had not yet gone through the first stage of processing, had gotten into the No. 6 separator, which uses water from Lake Michigan to cool equipment. That water is supposed to go from a holding pond back into the lake, and was contaminated with crude oil before it was discharged through an outflow pipe, Beslow said. The equipment has a detection mechanism that immediately alerted refinery workers to the discharge.

BP said in a statement that there had been no further discharge of oil.

"Based on preliminary information, BP believes an upset at a crude distillation unit may have sent crude oil into the refinery's cooling water outfall and then into the lake. BP's investigation of the incident continues and the refinery has taken steps to prevent another discharge," the company said in a statement. "Meanwhile, response efforts continue. Lines of boom have been deployed to contain the oil and wind has blown oil toward the shore, where crews are vacuuming it out of the water and cleaning the limited quantities that have reached land between the refinery's wastewater treatment plant and a nearby steel mill."

The company had not yet determined how much oil was discharged but expected to be able to provide an estimate as soon as Wednesday.

Preliminary reports suggest as many as 10 to 12 barrels were discharged. A U.S. Coast Guard unit found an area of about 5,000 square feet covered in crude oil.

BP deployed about 2,000 feet of boom and six vacuum trucks, and contained the spill to an area between the refinery and the Indiana Harbor steel mill. A U.S. Coast Guard helicopter and a BP plane flew over the lake, and observed no sheen outside of the boomed-off cove.

Some of the crude oil washed up on sandy and rocky beaches at the refinery, which is fenced off. Coast Guard responders found an average of 20 tarballs, each less than 1 centimeter in diameter,

per 10 feet of shoreline. The contaminated area stretched for about 2,700 feet, or about half a mile, along the shore, Beslow said.

As of Tuesday, cleanup crews recovered 5,200 gallons of an oil-water mixture, which was mostly water, said federal on-scene coordinator Jeremy Thomas, who is a U.S. Coast Guard Marine science technician first class. They also recovered 10 square yards of oily debris, and oily booms and absorbent pads, he said.

"We're working to minimize any impact to the environment," he said. "Conditions have been extremely helpful because the winds and waves have been pushing the oil to a natural collection point."

Cleanup and containment efforts, which are under the supervision of the EPA and Coast Guard, were ongoing overnight and are expected to continue for at least another day or two.

Dan Goldblatt, spokesman for the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, said crews at the scene about 2 a.m. Tuesday reported "a large sheen on the lake."

Sheens on natural waterways are considered violations of the federal Clean Water Act. Dean said the sheen was no longer visible about 8:30 a.m. Tuesday.

Lake Michigan is a source of drinking water to millions of people throughout the Chicago area, but the spill took place nowhere near any water utility intake pipes, said Charles Pietrucha, superintendent of the Hammond Water Works filtration plant. The Hammond utility, which provides water to 300,000 people throughout Northwest Indiana and Chicago's southeast suburbs, is monitoring water quality extra closely after the spill, though it was never close to contaminating the supply of drinking water.

Hammond's two intake pipes are both a few miles northeast of the spill, and also are located at least 20 feet under the surface.

"It was never a threat, but we will monitor somewhat more closely," Pietrucha said. "Due to where the intakes are and the wind direction, it was never even a threat."

The oil did not pose any hazard to nearby Whihala Beach because it was small and contained before it got anywhere close, Lake County Parks CEO Bob Nickovich said.

"My understanding is the company was very quick to respond, and it is pretty well contained," he said.

Nicole Barker, executive director of Save the Dunes, said the spill has the Michigan City-based environmental group concerned about the impact of the spill on the environment, drinking water, recreational, fishing and shipping industries.

"This BP spill, while seemingly contained and currently under control exemplifies some of the concerns Save the Dunes has with transporting and refining oil near Lake Michigan," Barker said.

"We are glad to see that the crews effectively responded to the spill and it is fortunate that winds were blowing in a way that pushed the oil toward the shoreline," Barker said. "However, irreversible damage can be caused by spills into our waterways and it is our greatest hope that the oil was contained before causing great harm to the Lake Michigan ecosystem."

Production was never disrupted at the 413,000-barrel-per-day refinery, Dean said.

WEEKLY NEWSCLIPS, 3-28-14

http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/whiting/malfunction-at-bp-whiting-refinery-sends-oil-into-lake-michigan/article_f0d5e8c4-1b8c-54d4-883c-270a99e60859.html

Oil spills into Lake Michigan from BP refinery in Indiana

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Cleanup crews work to deploy a containment boom along the Lake Michigan shoreline near the BP Whiting Refinery in Whiting, Ind., March 25, 2014, to recover crude oil discharged from the refinery.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Parker Wood U.S. Coast Guard

1 of 2

We're updating this post as we wait for an estimate on how much oil spilled into Lake Michigan from the BP refinery in Whiting, Indiana.

Update March 27th 4:39 p.m.

BP has revised its estimate of how much oil spilled Monday. It now says 15-39 barrels leaked from the Whiting Refinery. That's about 630-1,36 gallons.

Petty Officer Jeremy Thomas is with the US Coast Guard's Marine Safety unit in Chicago.

He says a small crew has been removing the oil manually. He says the cleanup efforts are going well.

"That involves either a gloved hand or a shovel or rake or some sort of hand powered tool to remove the oil from the shoreline," Thomas said.

Thomas says federal agencies are waiting for weather conditions to improve before assessing if there's any heavy tar sands oil on the lake bottom.

"There's nothing that leads us to believe that there's any down there but we want to rule it out because of course we want to make sure the environment's safe and healthy and clean," Thomas said.

It's not clear what exactly caused the spill or how long cleanup will take.

Update 7:21 p.m.

BP released a statement about an hour ago saying they are still estimating the amount of oil that was spilled and assessing whether more work will need to be done. From their statement:

Crews have recovered the vast majority of oil that had been visible on the surface of a cove-like area of Lake Michigan and on the shoreline between the refinery and a nearby steel mill. They have used vacuum trucks and absorbent boom to contain and clean up the surface oil.

Responders also manually collected oil that had reached the shore.

Monitoring continues in coordination with the U.S. Coast Guard, EPA and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management.

Update 4:37 p.m.

Michigan Radio's Cynthia Canty spoke with Chicago Tribune environmental reporter Michael Hawthorne this afternoon about the spill. You can listen to the full interview [here](#).

Hawthorne told us about the history of the Whiting refinery. It's one of the oldest refineries in the country.

"We don't know yet just how much oil was released from the refinery into Lake Michigan a couple of days ago. Some people were suggesting, at least off the record from the company, were suggesting that it was about 10 barrels - 12 barrels, not a lot in relative terms," said Hawthorne.

"And given the amount of pollution that's already going into the lake from that part of northwest Indiana, how much affect it had on the lake, at least in the eyes of environmental regulators is fairly minimal."

Just how the oil got into the cooling system is still a mystery. BP told us that the system is designed to keep the water and oil separate - similar to how the cooling system works in your car. Somehow, a slug of oil got into that cooling system.

... the BP Whiting refinery is one of the biggest industrial polluters on Lake Michigan.

The BP Whiting refinery recently completed an upgrade that cost nearly \$4 billion so the facility could process heavier Canadian tar sands oil. The switchover meant the refinery needed permits that would allow more pollution to be released into the environment.

Hawthorne points out that the BP Whiting refinery is one of the biggest industrial polluters on Lake Michigan.

Update 1:20 p.m.

The Chicago Tribune released this video of the cleanup along the shore of Lake Michigan. A BP refinery in Whiting, Indiana spilled a mix of heavy and light crude oil into the Lake. The EPA and the U.S. Coast Guard are overseeing the cleanup.

Update 11:06 a.m.

We're waiting for an estimate on how much oil spilled into Lake Michigan from the BP refinery in Whiting, Indiana. BP spokesman Scott Dean said they expect to have that update later this afternoon. He says they base their estimate on how much oil they pull out of the water.

Dean said the winds on Lake Michigan have been blowing onshore, which kept the oil contained within the cove, and that they know of no wildlife impacts thus far.

BP says the oil that spilled was a mix of light and heavy crude oil.

Update: Tuesday, March 26, 8:50 p.m.

BP sent an update this evening saying the investigation into the spill continues as does the clean-up effort:

Lines of boom have been deployed to contain the oil and wind has blown oil toward the shore, where crews are vacuuming it out of the water and cleaning the limited quantities that have reached land between the refinery's wastewater treatment plant and a nearby steel mill.

BP has not yet determined precisely how much oil was discharged but expects to be able to provide an estimate as early as Wednesday.

Original post: Tuesday, March 26, 5:07 p.m.

A BP spokesperson told us they don't have an estimate on how much crude oil spilled, but he says the spill has stopped and "the response remains underway."

The spill started sometime yesterday and was stopped around 1 a.m. this morning, according to

Michael Hawthorne of the [Chicago Tribune](#).

BP's Whiting refinery is located on the shores of Lake Michigan in northwest Indiana. See the red pin below:



Location of the BP Whiting refinery.

Credit Google Maps

The facility is 20 miles southeast of Chicago.

The [U.S. Coast Guard reports](#) that they received word of the spill Monday night:

The Coast Guard received a report Monday night from watchstanders the National Response Center of a sheen from an unknown substance discharging from an outflow adjacent to the refinery.

Personnel from Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit Chicago and the EPA responded last night and found an area of about 5,000 square feet covered in crude oil.

Oil booms and vacuum trucks are being used by BP in an attempt to clean up the spill. The Coast Guard reports that pollution responders found tar balls less than one centimeter in diameter on the shore of the cove, "averaging 20 tar balls per 10 feet of shoreline."

BP spokesman Scott Dean told the [Associated Press](#) that a malfunction led to the release:

He says the oil entered the refinery's cooling water system, which discharges into the lake about 20 miles southeast of downtown Chicago.

Indiana Department of Environmental Management spokesman Dan Goldblatt says an agency staffer reported seeing a large sheen on the lake about 2 a.m. Tuesday. Dean says that sheen was in the cove and was no longer visible several hours later.

The refinery processes heavy diluted bitumen oil known as "tar sands" oil. That type of oil can sink in turbulent water making cleanup more difficult.

BP says they will have an update later this evening. The U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. EPA are overseeing the cleanup.

**This post has been updated.*

<http://michiganradio.org/post/oil-spills-lake-michigan-bp-refinery-indiana>

BP contains oil spill in Lake Michigan, begins cleanup

March 25, 2014

By: Michael Puente



WBEZ/Michael Puente

BP is not saying how much crude oil spilled into Lake Michigan but says it has stopped and is contained. The BP Whiting Refinery is located in northwest Indiana on the shore of Lake Michigan, 20 miles southeast of Chicago, Ill.

WHITING, Ind. — BP says it has contained and is now cleaning up crude oil that spilled into Lake Michigan from its Whiting, Indiana refinery near Chicago.

The spill was detected about 4:30 Monday afternoon.

Reminiscent of the tar balls collected off the Gulf Coast after a different BP spill a few years ago, this one was confined to a shallow cove between the massive refinery and a steel mill.

BP spokesman Scott Dean said it appears the crude oil somehow seeped into the refinery's water filtration plant adjacent to the lake.

“We were able to quickly deploy our oil spill response contractor and we’ve seen the leak stopped yesterday and we’ve got a containment boom in place that’s holding the amount of oil that was released from the discharge into this cove,” Dean said.

Dean said there have been no injuries, and cleanup activities along the 2,700 feet of affected shore line are still going on.

“The good news is the leak stopped and we’ve got it contained,” Dean said.

Dean said the cold temperature of the lake and air may have actually aided in containing the oil, turning the crude oil into like a gel-like substance.

But questions remain about how the crude oil got into the lake in the first place.

BP just completed a \$4 billion modernization to the 100-year-old Whiting Refinery, the largest inland refinery in the United States.

Sources helping with the cleanup estimate about a dozen barrels of crude spilled into the lake, with some containing what’s considered sweet crude oil and some containing oil from Canada’s tar sands region.

After discovering the discharge, BP notified the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. EPA and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. Representatives from the agencies were at the refinery Monday evening.

BP says it will continue to work in full cooperation with the agencies to ensure the protection of personnel, the environment and surrounding communities.

The U.S. EPA says is unaware of any other spills from the refinery.

Mike Beslow, the onsite coordinator for the EPA at the scene, said the oil spill should not affect the quality of Lake Michigan’s drinking water.

He says it appears the oil was released from one of BP’s separators into the lake.

Beslow says the separator is like a holding pond and normally does not have oil in it.

He adds that BP’s own systems immediately detected oil that got into the water filtration plant and into the lake.

Beslow says it’s too early to determine if any fines will be assessed against BP for the spill.

<http://www.wbez.org/news/bp-contains-oil-spill-lake-michigan-begins-cleanup-109914>

BP says majority of surface oil recovered after spill



John J. Watkins, The Times

Crews comb the beach Tuesday near the BP Whiting Refinery to clean up an oil spill in Lake Michigan.

19 hours ago • [Lauri Harvey Keagle and Joseph S. Pete Times Staff Writers](#)

WHITING | After the second day of cleanup, crews have removed the "vast majority" of surface oil floating in a Lake Michigan cove after BP Whiting Refinery discharged as much as 756 gallons of crude into the Great Lake.

BP estimates that between 9 and 18 barrels were released after a mechanical glitch expelled cooling water mixed with unprocessed crude oil through an outflow pipe Monday afternoon, according to a U.S. Coast Guard news release. A barrel contains 42 gallons of oil.

More than 2,000 feet of boom confined the oil to a cove on the southeast side of the refinery, between the refinery's wastewater treatment plant and the ArcelorMittal Indiana Harbor steel mill. Tarballs washed up on about a half mile of sandy and rocky beach at the refinery.

Officials have not determined the exact amount of oil that was discharged, but came up with a preliminary estimate Wednesday so that environmental modeling could begin. A more accurate calculation will involve engineers ascertaining how much oil got into the refinery's cooling water system before it was ultimately released into the lake.

BP employees cleaned up more of the crude oil Wednesday, under the supervision of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Coast Guard and Indiana Department Environmental Management.

"Crews have recovered the vast majority of oil that had been visible on the surface of a cove-like

area of Lake Michigan and on the shoreline between the refinery and a nearby steel mill," spokesman Scott Dean said. "They have used vacuum trucks and absorbent boom to contain and clean up the surface oil. Responders also manually collected oil that had reached the shore."

Federal officials monitored the second day of cleanup operations Wednesday and assessed the shoreline to figure out what further steps are required in the response. An eight-member shoreline cleanup assessment team scanned the beach for crude oil and recommended cleanup techniques.

After three hours, they saw minimal oiling along the refinery's shoreline, which is inaccessible to the public. Crews manually removed the crude oil, which had included scattered tarballs. The little blobs of semi-solid oil, each less than 1 centimeter in diameter, are the smallest form of congealed oil that can wash up on shore after a spill, said U.S. Coast Guard Marine Science Technician 1st Class Jeremy Thomas, a federal on-scene coordinator.

EPA Region 5 Administrator Susan Hedman said Tuesday the federal agency was reviewing whether to pursue fines or penalties against BP. She said she was not aware of any previous spills at the 413,000-barrel-a-day refinery, which just received a \$4 billion upgrade so it could process more heavy crude oil from Canada's oil sands region.

U.S. Sens. Dick Durbin and Mark Kirk, of Illinois, talked to EPA officials about the spill and said they want BP to be held liable. They said in a joint statement Tuesday that protecting Lake Michigan is a priority, because it is the primary source of drinking water for millions of people in and around Chicago.

They said they were encouraged the oil had been contained and that the impact was expected to be minimal.

"However, three weeks ago, BP announced a plan to nearly double its processing of heavy crude oil at its BP Whiting Refinery," they said in the statement.

"Given today's events and BP's decision to increase production, we are extremely concerned about the possibility of a future spill that may not be so easily contained. We plan to hold BP accountable for this spill and will ask for a thorough report about the cause of this spill; what the impact of the Whiting Refinery's production increase on Lake Michigan will be and what steps are being taken to prevent any future spill."

http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/whiting/bp-says-majority-of-surface-oil-recovered-after-spill/article_f33200d9-2a62-5dc4-ae8b-a358415aa0e3.html

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By Associated Press

WHITING, Ind. — Crews for oil giant BP worked Tuesday to clean up an undetermined amount of crude oil that spilled into Lake Michigan and affected about a half-mile section of shoreline near Chicago following a malfunction at BP's northwestern Indiana refinery, officials said.

The spill reported Monday afternoon by BP appears to have been contained by company workers who deployed absorbent booms around the spill site, said Mike Beslow, on-scene coordinator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Region 5.

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BP spokesman Scott Dean said the area affected by the spill was a cove at the company's sprawling Whiting refinery, which covers about 1,400 acres.

The spill is about 20 miles southeast of downtown Chicago and three miles south of the farthest part of the city but was not expected to pose any threat to municipal water supplies that draw on the lake's water, Beslow said. Many of Chicago's suburbs, including almost all in DuPage County, also draw drinking water from Lake Michigan.

A Coast Guard flyover of the area Tuesday did not reveal any oil outside the containment booms, Beslow said, "but there is oil on the beach that is being addressed."

Beslow said BP crews were using vacuum trucks to suck up the corralled oil and were cleaning up oil along 2,700 feet of private shoreline the company owns.

The EPA and the Coast Guard were supervising that work, Beslow said.

Beslow said the Coast Guard was working with BP officials to determine how much oil had been discharged into the lake.

Dean, the BP spokesman, said northerly winds were helping contain the oil by pushing it toward the shoreline.

"It's in the lake, yes, but it's not moving around freely. It's been kind of contained because of the weather and of the geography of the lakefront there," Dean said.

BP said in a statement Tuesday evening that it believes that "an upset at a crude distillation unit may have sent crude oil into the refinery's cooling water outfall and then into the lake."

The company said it has taken steps to prevent another discharge and might have an estimate Wednesday on how much oil was spilled.

BP initially reported to the EPA that when its workers discovered the spill they observed an oily sheen that covered about 5,000 square yards, said Susan Hedman, the EPA's regional administrator.

Dan Goldblatt, a spokesman for the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, said an agency official who was at the scene around 2 a.m. Tuesday had reported "a large sheen on the lake."

Hedman said the EPA is not aware of any previous oil spills at the site, but the agency is just beginning its assessment of this week's spill.

"EPA's lawyers will be looking into this matter and determining whether or not enforcement action is appropriate," she said.

Two Chicago-area Congressmen released statements Tuesday about the spill. 10th District Rep. Brad Schneider said events such as Monday's spill "reaffirm the necessity of efforts to safeguard the Great Lakes from unjustifiable environmental risk. We can never allow oil drilling in Lake Michigan, and we must oversee and help guarantee the safety of refineries, prevent the spread of invasive species and stop the flow of toxins into the Great Lakes."

And 9th District Rep. Jan Schakowsky said she has been worried about the refinery since it expanded in 2008, including the refining of the heavier crude oil collected from Alberta tar sands, which produces petroleum coke as a byproduct.

"This spill suggests yet another reason that tar sands are wrong for our country and a threat to public health and our environment," Schakowsky said.

•Daily Herald staff writer Susan Sarkauskas contributed to this report.

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